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DAN SMOOT

ISRAEL—PART II

Policies of the U.S. government are responsible, to a considerable degree, for the dangerous situation in Palestine. Unless those policies change, they will eventually get us into a war in the Middle East. This is the second in a series of articles attempting to outline what those policies are, and how they evolved.

Palestine has been the homeland of Arabs for 2000 years. Throughout the Middle Ages (and afterward), when there was harsh hostility between Christians and Jews in the Christian nations of Europe, Jews and Arabs got along well together. The relatively few Jews who sought refuge in Arab lands were welcome.

No real conflict between Arabs and Jews developed until late in the 19th century, when the movement known as zionism was formally launched.

Just as many Negroes in the United States have been deceived into supporting the communist-planned civil-rights movement, thinking it was a humanitarian effort to improve the lot of Negroes, many Jews throughout the world have been deceived into supporting zionism, thinking it was: (1) a humane effort to provide a refuge for persecuted Jews; and (2) a religious movement to establish a national headquarters for the Jewish faith.

Actually, zionism always has been a political movement, whose purpose was to colonize Palestine with enough alien Jews to take the land away from Arabs and create a Jewish political state.

The zionist claim, that Palestine is historically Jewish land, rests on the historical fact that a Jewish nation existed there for a brief period almost 3000 years ago. By the same logic, present descendants of Indians who inhabited the Americas 400 years ago could lay claim to ownership of the entire Western Hemisphere.

The zionist claim that homeless Jews were entitled to a refuge in Palestine has had strong humanitarian appeal. But what about Arabs who — in almost exactly equivalent numbers — were despoiled of their

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lands and other property and driven into squalid refugee camps in the process of making Palestine a haven for Jews?

The conflict in Palestine between zionism and Arab nationalism could never have escalated into its present dangerous importance, without the machinations of political leaders in Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

Great Britain started zionism and Arab nationalism on a collision course during World War I — by promising Arabs political independence in Palestine, while also promising to support the zionist program for Palestine. Harry Truman engineered the collision in 1948 by supporting the establishment of a zionist state in the heart of the Arab homeland. The Soviets — by using Arab hatred of Israel and resentment of the United States to promote Soviet expansionist aims in the Middle East — have aggravated the problem into an explosive situation that could shatter the world.

The first Arab-Israeli war began May 14, 1948, when zionists in Palestine suddenly and unilaterally proclaimed the Jewish state of Israel. Eleven minutes later, a spokesman for President Truman in Washington announced U.S. diplomatic recognition of Israel.[1] Truman was facing a presidential election which few thought he could win. He needed the votes and powerful influence of Jews, especially in the key political state of New York where, in one city alone, at least two million Jews resided. There was no politically important "Arab vote" or "Arab influence" in the United States.

As soon as the state of Israel was proclaimed on May 14, 1948, troops from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia entered Palestine to help the Arabs. They wrested a part of northern Jerusalem and the Jewish quarter of the Old City from the Israelis. The UN Security Council ordered a cease-fire, which went into effect on June 11, 1948. While UN representatives were in Palestine trying to mediate a settlement, the Israelis smuggled in, by air and sea, huge quantities of arms. On July 9, the Israelis suddenly renewed hostilities, and successfully routed the Arabs on all fronts. Thereafter, the Israelis ignored all UN Security Council cease-fire orders that did not suit their immediate needs.[2]

Sporadic fighting continued until January, 1949. A formal armistice agreement was made February 24, 1949. In that first Arab-Israeli war of 1948, about one million Arabs were driven from their homes, their farms, their businesses in Palestine. Most of them took refuge in the Gaza Strip (a narrow piece of desert on the Mediterranean coast) and in other Arab territory, where they and their progeny are still living, in hopeless poverty, surviving on an American dole administered by the United Nations.

Arab refugees — homeless and propertyless, embittered and desperate, and now numbering almost two million — have created grave economic, social, and political problems in the Middle East. They supply the recruits for the *fedayeen*, guerrilla groups that make retaliatory and terroristic raids on Israel. In the smaller Arab nations that have tried to remain pro-Western, and moderate in their attitude toward Israel (Jordan and Lebanon), the *fedayeen* often have more public support, and therefore more strength, than the official governments. They are sometimes beyond the control of government even in the strongest Arab countries.

The precise boundaries of the state of Israel are not known. A United Nations partition plan of November 29, 1947, assigned 4300 square miles of Palestine for an Arab state, 5700 square miles for a Jewish state. In the 1948 war, Israel seized and kept 1400 square miles of territory that had been assigned to Arabs.[2]

Israel thus annexed almost a third more territory than was allotted to it under the UN partition plan. Egypt took over the Gaza Strip. Jordan annexed the west bank of the Jordan River, including the Old City of Jerusalem. Israel was in possession of the New City of Jerusalem. The UN plan for an internationally administered Jerusalem was dead.

Harry Truman won his election in 1948; but political wars never really end. Congressional elections came up in 1950, and Democrats made another strong bid for zionist support. In May,

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1950, the Truman administration entered a joint agreement with France and England to aid any victim of aggression in the Middle East. This meant, of course, protecting Israel in the possession of Arab territory seized during the 1948 war.

In 1952, both Republican and Democrat parties pledged the American government to defend any Middle Eastern nation against aggression.

On April 10, 1956 — continuing crises in the Middle East having come to another crescendo — President Eisenhower announced that the U.S. was "determined to support and assist any nation which might be subjected to . . . aggression [in the Middle East.]" At that time, it looked as if the "aggression" would be committed by Arabs trying to take back some of the territory seized from them in 1948.

But a few months later, all went topsy turvy. In July, 1956, Nasser of Egypt nationalized the internationally-owned Suez Canal, and closed it to Israeli shipping. In October, Israel suddenly attacked Egypt, driving deep into the Sinai Peninsula and occupying the Gaza Strip. Great Britain and France joined Israel two days later, attacking Egyptian airfields and making paratroop landings in the Canal Zone.

Clearly, someone was a "victim of aggression," and we were on record to defend *any* such victim.

Egypt was in the hands of a dictator who was a virtual puppet of our enemy, the Soviet Union. France, Great Britain, and Israel were presumably our best friends; but they had plunged into war, in an area where we had dangerous commitments, without discussing the matter with us or even giving us advance notice. Was Egypt the aggressor for provoking Israel? Or was Israel the aggressor for making a military attack on Egypt?

What should we do?

This hard decision confronted President Eisenhower a few days before the 1956 general election when American voters would decide whether to return him to office or to replace him with Adlai Stevenson; and, at that time, political analysts were predicting the contest would be very close.

Candidate Stevenson spoke on the issue first, saying the U.S. should intervene — *on the side of Israel.* The public was alarmed at the prospect of American intervention in the Middle Eastern war.

President Eisenhower took his stand on the evening of October 31, 1956, saying:

"The United States was not consulted in any way about any phase of these actions [against Egypt by Israel, Great Britain, and France]. Nor were we informed of them in advance. . . . In the circumstances . . . . there will be no United States involvement in these present hostilities."

That turned the trick in the 1956 elections. Eisenhower won handsomely.

Eventually, France, England, and Israel responded to U.S. and UN pressures for a cease-fire. Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. The UN sent a 6000-man peacekeeping force to patrol the Egyptian side of the 170-mile frontier between Israel and Egypt.[3]

Then, with the election safely behind him, President Eisenhower reached into the pockets of American taxpayers to reward our allies for stopping the war they had started: a $500 million loan to Great Britain, forgiving an $83 million interest payment due on previous loans; a promise of oil and other aid to all of Europe to keep it from suffering the consequences of the brief Middle Eastern war.

Soviet influence waxed and American influence waned in the Middle East, following the 1956 war. In an effort presumably intended to retrieve some of the Arab friendship we had lost, President Eisenhower (in January, 1957), asked Congress to approve the Eisenhower Doctrine. This Doctrine (which Congress approved, though public opinion was 9 to 1 against it) was a promise of limitless military aid, including the use of American armed forces (with the proviso that our troops would be under the "overriding authority of the United Nations Security Council"), to any Middle Eastern nation requesting such aid against

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"overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism."[4]

The 1957 Eisenhower Doctrine did not deter Soviet penetration of the Middle East. Its chief result was a 10-year armaments race. The U.S. helped finance both sides, giving military aid to Israel and Arab nations.[5] France and England (with American tax money which had been given or lent by our government) also helped finance both sides. The Soviets, pursuing their strategy of encouraging Arab-Israeli hostility to widen the rift between the U.S. and its former Arab friends, gave military aid only to the Arabs.

In 1967, Nasser of Egypt demanded withdrawal of the UN force that had been in Egypt patrolling the Egyptian-Israeli border since the 1956 war. The UN complied. Nasser blustered about closing Suez and the Strait of Tiran (passage to the Gulf of Aqaba) to Israeli shipping, and about an Arab holy war to destroy Israel. The Middle East, heavily armed and fully mobilized, was a tinderbox.

Both sides accuse the other of making the first strike in the 1967 war. Facts indicate that Israel struck first. At any rate, Israel struck, efficiently and furiously, on June 5, 1967, destroying Arab air power on the ground.

In six days, Arab forces were utterly smashed. Israeli casualties were 679 killed, 2563 wounded, 16 captured. Arab casualties were 15,000 killed, 50,000 wounded, 11,500 captured. Of the some $700 million in military equipment (mostly Soviet) lost by the Arabs, a great deal was not destroyed, but was captured by the Israelis. Israel seized from Syria, Jordan, and Egypt territory four times bigger than the nation of Israel before the 1967 war;[6] and she immediately began building roads linking the conquered Arab lands to Israel, thus giving rather convincing proof of her intention to keep them permanently.[7]

In the 1967 war, Israel brilliantly demonstrated a military principle which all Americans should yearn for their own government to heed: namely, if you are going to fight a war, fight it — quickly, fiercely, totally, aiming for nothing less than complete victory at the earliest possible moment.

NEXT WEEK: To be continued.

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FOOTNOTES

(1) *Memoirs*, by Harry S. Truman, Doubleday, 1956, Vol. II, pp. 132-69
(2) *The Encyclopedia Americana*, 1961 edition
(3) *U.S. News & World Report*, June 19, 1967, pp. 44-6
(4) Message to Congress, by Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jan. 5, 1957
(5) *U.S. News & World Report*, June 26, 1967, p. 28
(6) *U.S. News & World Report*, June 26, 1967, pp. 11, 26, 27
(7) *U.S. News & World Report*, Jan. 20, 1969, p. 48

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